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14 December 1983  
FB TM 83-050

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# TRENDS

## In Communist Media

This issue includes . . .

- Moscow on START
- Romanian boycott of bloc meeting
- North Korea on Rangoon bombing

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## Korea

### DPRK Displays Heightened Sensitivity Over Rangoon Incident

*North Korea appears to be increasingly concerned about the damage the Rangoon bombing incident has done to its international image. DPRK media treatment of international censure over the bombing originally indicated Pyongyang hoped the damage could be limited, but it now suggests the North has come to hold a less sanguine view.*

Pyongyang has intensified its efforts to rebut allegations concerning the North's role in the attempt on ROK President Chon Tu-hwan's life. On 12 December the Foreign Ministry issued a memorandum, carried by KCNA the next day, which contained the most detailed, authoritative rebuttal to date of charges that the October bombing was the work of North Korean agents. Responding to testimony given at the 22 November-9 December trial in Rangoon of two suspects charged with the bombing, the memorandum denounced the trial as an "unfair" attempt to implicate North Korea in the incident. The memorandum argued that the trial actually demonstrated that the North is "innocent" and "upright."

The memorandum was preceded on the 9th by unusually detailed DPRK media coverage of a lengthy roundtable discussion published in a Japanese journal that questioned the case against the North and raised the possibility of South Korean involvement in the incident. Also on the 9th, the clandestine Voice of the Revolutionary Party for Reunification (VRPR), which is beamed from North to South Korea, aired a lengthy article by the RPR organization and propaganda department detailing examples of "filthy, slanderous anti-communist maneuvers" allegedly carried out by South Korea over the past three decades. The article went on to suggest that the South's version of the Rangoon incident was part of a history of fabrications intended to discredit the North and bolster the position of South Korean leaders.

In the past two weeks, Pyongyang also has adopted a much more combative posture in countering international reaction to the incident. A 1 December *Nodong Sinmun* commentary, reported the same day by KCNA, attacked a *Newsweek* article for claiming that North Korean embassies engage in

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terrorism and smuggling. The same day, a VRPR commentary noted South Korean efforts to garner international support for sanctions against the North and criticized an FRG official visiting Seoul for discussing "disciplinary measures" against the DPRK, criticism that had been omitted from previous North Korean media comment on the visit.

This more aggressive stance was also exhibited in an 8 December DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement responding to Costa Rica's decision to break relations with the North over the Rangoon incident. The language used in the statement was noticeably harsher than that used in authoritative responses last month to Burma's decision to break relations with Pyongyang and to Japan's decision to impose sanctions against North Korea. It also went beyond that used by the North in similar situations over the past decade, squarely "denouncing" the Costa Rican authorities for their actions and omitting even the usual pledge to continue to work for good relations with the Costa Rican "people."

Similarly, the 12 December DPRK memorandum on the bombing incident employed some of the sharpest language Pyongyang has yet used against Burma. The memorandum claimed that "the Burmese authorities besmirched their faces with their own hands by dancing to the drumbeating" of outside forces and that they will long suffer the "evil consequences of this." A similarly harsh tone was employed against Burma in a *Nodong Sinmun* commentary on the 14th condemning the trial.

Kim Il-song appears to have made a special effort to repair the North's image in remarks he made at a 3 December banquet for a visiting Guyanese delegation. Departing from the normal practice in recent years—which has been to give the Korean issue only passing attention in banquet speeches for visitors—Kim used the occasion to reaffirm specifically that the North has "no intention" of invading the South. That same assertion had appeared in a 15 November DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement condemning President Reagan's visit to Korea last month. (U/FOUO)

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